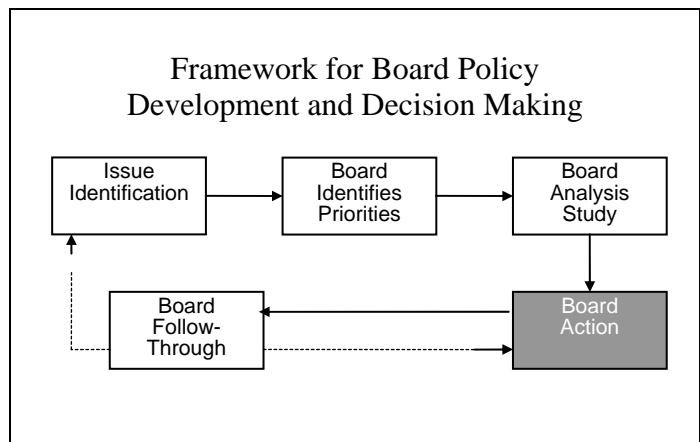


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary September 14, 2006



Agenda Item: Ashford University's Master of Arts in Teaching Practitioner Preparation Program

Iowa Goal: 3. Iowans will pursue higher education that results in an improved quality of life supported by better economic opportunities through high skill employment.

Equity Impact Statement: The practitioner preparation program standards support the improvement of instructional practices and strengthen the quality of educator preparation and professional development programs to give educators at all levels the skills they need to improve teaching and learning.

Presenter: Arlie Willems, Administrative Consultant, Practitioner Preparation
Division of Pk-12 Education

Attachments: 1

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board grant an extension of conditional approval of Ashford's MAT program for the limited purpose of permitting program completion by the cohort of approximately 66 candidates who are scheduled to student teach in the spring of 2007. Conditional approval will extend to July 1, 2007, for these candidates to accommodate completion of the portfolio course, EDU 698, following student teaching.

Background: Iowa Code 256.7(3) grants authority to the state board of education to set standards and approve practitioner preparation programs based on those standards.

In August 2004, the State Board conditionally approved The Franciscan University's three new online Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) programs with a follow-up evaluation to be conducted at the end of the 2004-05 academic year and a full review to be conducted during 2005-2006.

In spring 2005, The Franciscan University was renamed Ashford University when it became a wholly owned subsidiary of Bridgepoint Education, Inc. In August of 2005, Department staff visited the Ashford University campus; on August 11, 2005, the State Board granted conditional approval, effective through the completion of a full program review. A full program review has been completed, including a site visit April 3-5, 2006.

On July 27, 2006, the State Board granted 1) an extension of conditional approval of the MAT Program until April 1, 2007, to allow program completion by the cohort of candidates student teaching in the fall of 2006 and 2) an extension of conditional approval of the MAT Program until the September Board meeting to allow a decision to be made at that time regarding the remaining candidates in the MAT Program.

Recommendation for the Extension of
Conditional Approval of
Ashford University Master of Arts in Teaching
Program for Initial Secondary Licensure:
September 14, 2006

To grant an extension of conditional approval of Ashford's MAT program for the limited purpose of permitting program completion by the cohort of (approximately 66) candidates who are scheduled to student teach in the spring of 2007. Conditional approval will extend to July 1, 2007, for these candidates to accommodate completion of the portfolio course, EDU 698, following student teaching.

In making the recommendation for limited extension of conditional approval status only, the Department acknowledges concern for candidates who would be unable to complete this program if the extension were not granted. Additionally, the Department expresses appreciation to the hard-working, well-intended individuals at Ashford University who have attempted to correct issues of concern.

Full approval of the MAT program is not recommended. Thus, no students can be admitted to the MAT program until/unless the MAT program is approved by the State Board. This does not prejudice the rights of Ashford University to approach the agency and State Board at a future time to request full approval of a MAT program.

Ashford University is a private higher education institution offering graduate and undergraduate programs “on-ground” at its Clinton campus as well as on-line nationally. The University, originally named Mount St. Clare College, was founded in 1918 by the Sisters of St. Francis as a junior college for women. In 1950 the college was accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and has since maintained its accreditation. Baccalaureate degree programs were initiated in 1979; in 2002, as the institution added graduate degrees, the name of the school was changed to The Franciscan University, later The Franciscan University of the Prairies. In 2005, The University was renamed Ashford University when it became a wholly owned subsidiary of Bridgepoint Education, Inc., a holding company housed in Poway, California.

The Ashford University Masters in Teaching (MAT) is an on-line program leading to initial licensure in secondary education in eleven endorsement areas. Candidates are expected to meet the endorsement content requirements as a result of previous coursework. As of August 29, 2006, 96 candidates were students in the program: 30 candidates are scheduled to student teach in the fall of 2006, 66 are scheduled to student teach in the spring of 2007. Eighteen of the total 96 candidates are Iowa residents; the remainder of the candidates reside in 25 states.

Timeline for the Ashford MAT program

- August 12, 2004: Conditional approval for three on-line programs, including MAT
 - Teacher Intern Program
 - Master of Arts in Teaching for Initial Secondary Licensure
 - Master of Arts in Teaching for Initial Secondary Licensure, combined with the Teacher Intern Program
- Spring, 2005: Purchase of The Franciscan University (of the Prairies) by Bridgepoint Education, Inc., a holding company housed in Poway, California. School renamed Ashford University
- July 21, 2005: Iowa Department of Education (DE) one-day visit to Ashford
- August 11, 2005: Conditional approval for the above three programs with full review to be completed in April of 2006
- November 8, 2005: Notification to the DE of Ashford’s intention to discontinue the Teacher Intern Program
- December 7, 2005: DE/BoEE meeting with Ashford representatives at Grimes Building
- February 2, 2006: Preliminary Review followed by report to Ashford and submission by Ashford of revised Institutional Report
- April 3-5, 2006: On-site visit
- April 19, 2006: Letter to DE stating that Ashford is discontinuing new enrollments in the MAT Program; the most recent cohort to start the program began January 17, 2006.
- May 24, 2006: DE meeting with Ashford representatives at Grimes Building
- July 14, 2006: Letter from Ashford to DE stating a commitment “to meeting all the standards necessary for a successful teach out of the MAT Program.”
- July 27, 2006: The State Board granted 1) an extension of conditional approval of the MAT Program until April 1, 2007, to allow program completion by the cohort of candidates student teaching in the fall of 2006 and 2) an extension of conditional approval of the MAT Program until the September Board meeting to allow a decision to be made at that time regarding the remaining candidates in the MAT Program.

**Requirements for Teach-Out Plan
for Student Teachers in Spring, 2007
Ashford University
August 29, 2006**

Three stipulations were specified for the Ashford MAT in a letter from the Iowa Department of Education (DE) to Ashford University following the July State Board meeting. These requirements and the actions taken to meet the stipulations include the following:

- 1) Each candidate shall student teach in an environment with appropriate support.

Ashford's response: All student teachers have been assigned an Ashford Supervisor. The majority of these supervisors are retired Iowa administrators who are trained evaluators; the remainder include Ashford faculty members with the exception of one retired master teacher. These supervisors will work with on-site evaluators, primarily administrators in the building in which the student teacher is placed.

- 2) Each student teacher shall have no fewer than six classroom observations during the 12 weeks of student teaching.

Each student teacher will be observed at least twice by an Ashford supervisor. These visits will be augmented by a minimum of four observations by a local, on-site administrator who will be compensated by Ashford for this work. It will be the responsibility of each Ashford supervisor to communicate regularly with the on-site administrators to ensure proper monitoring and support of each student teacher.

- 3) Ashford shall hire a qualified person to monitor the finalization of coursework by candidates as well as student teaching.

Vicki Goldsmith was hired on August 9, 2006, as Director of Supervision to monitor the final coursework and student teaching of Ashford MAT candidates. Vicki is the 2005-2006 Iowa Teacher of the Year and served as clinical expert on six practitioner preparation visit teams during the 2005-2006 school year.

Specific information required by the DE includes the following:

- 1) Candidate information
 - Name, address, etc.
 - Placement (name of school, location)
 - Teacher of record and principal contact information

A chart has been submitted to the DE including the above information.

- 2) Review of all transcripts by Director of Supervision according to appropriate curriculum exhibit sheets.
Vicki Goldsmith will be reviewing these transcripts; a timeframe has been established for this review.
- 3) Evaluations by Director of Supervision of online courses
Ms. Goldsmith will monitor all remaining courses, giving special attention to quality of candidate work, instructor feedback, and quality of online threaded discussions. Ms. Goldsmith will have access to the online communications and resources in order to fulfill this responsibility.
- 4) Faculty information and Faculty Development
Appropriate information has been submitted to the DE as has been documentation of training provided to supervisors and cooperating teachers.
- 5) Review of Handbook by Director of Supervision
The Student Teaching Handbook has been revised to reflect the changes required of the program. Ms. Goldsmith has reviewed the revised handbook and has found it appropriate.
- 6) Specific plan for student teachers having difficulty
Such a plan has been submitted to the DE. Responsibility for implementing this plan and supporting student teachers resides with the Ashford supervisors and the Ashford program. On-site evaluators will be involved as on-location support, but will not be expected to take primary responsibility for supervision or support of student teachers.
- 7) Fulfillment of responsibilities by cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and on-site evaluators
These responsibilities have been presented in a chart submitted to the DE.
- 8) Student teacher's ability to affect student learning
Each student teacher will be required to submit a teacher work sample linked to a unit prepared during the student teaching experience. Such work samples focus on use of student assessment in planning learning experiences. A guideline for student work samples has been submitted to the DE.
- 9) Means to verify appropriate match between endorsement and placement
Ms. Goldsmith and the Associate Dean reviewed the student teaching placements for the first semester and will do so for the second semester.
- 10) Updated schedule of courses, including student teaching
Such a schedule has been submitted to the DE.
- 11) Information to candidates regarding the Teach-Out of the Ashford MAT
Candidates have been informed.